

SENATE BILL 2885
By Dixon

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 65, to enact the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act".

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission has assigned 2-1-1 as the national telephone number for telephone service for information and referral on human services; and

WHEREAS, the number "2-1-1" is an easy-to-remember telephone number that facilitates critical connections between individuals and families seeking services, volunteer opportunities, or both and appropriate human service agencies, including community-based and faith-based organizations and government agencies; and

WHEREAS, individuals and families often find it difficult to navigate through a complex and ever growing maze of human service agencies and programs, spending inordinate amounts of time trying to identify an agency or program that provides a service that may be immediately or urgently required and often abandoning the search from frustration or a lack of quality information; and

WHEREAS, many families need information on government and not-for-profit services that address domestic violence, support adequate and stable housing, alleviate hunger, and provide for high-quality day care, afterschool activities, summer activities, job training and assistance, elder care, and disaster recovery; and

WHEREAS, individuals often need support, services, or both when suffering emotional distress, having suicidal thoughts or behavior, contemplating violence, or using drugs or alcohol; and

WHEREAS, the 107th Congress recognized the importance of 2-1-1 telephone service in community preparedness and response by including use of that telephone number for public information as an allowable use of funds under grants for preparedness and response to

bioterrorism and other public health emergencies under § 319C-1 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d-3a), as added by § 131 of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-188); and

WHEREAS, while twenty percent of the population has access to 2-1-1 telephone service in 21 states, inadequate funding prevents access to that telephone service throughout each of the states; and

WHEREAS, under the proposed federal program a state seeking a grant must act only through a lead entity which shall be treated as the 2-1-1 Collaborative for a state; and

WHEREAS, a 2-1-1 Collaborative must be created either under state law, be appointed by order of the state public utility commission, or be established by the state from among a variety of community-based, faith-based or not-for-profit organizations, and other foundations and businesses; and

WHEREAS, it is the sense of this general assembly that the most efficient and expedient method of designating a 2-1-1 Collaborative would be for the Tennessee Regulatory Authority to make such a designation; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. The title of this act is and may be cited as the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act".

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 65-4-117, is amended by designating the existing language as subsection (a) and by adding the following language as a new subsection (b):

(b) The authority has the additional power to designate the 2-1-1 Collaborative for the state of Tennessee and to establish the duties and responsibilities for such Collaborative.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 65-4-301(a), is amended by designating the existing language as subdivision (1) and by adding the following language to be designated as subdivision (2):

(2) In addition to the purposes for which such fees may be expended as provided in subdivision (1), such fees may also be expended to provide and ensure that 2-1-1 telephone service is made available statewide.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.